

Records & Repeat Winners

A record 1052 participants from all ends of New Zealand turned out for 14th Porirua Grand Traverse, and when the dust had settled Kathryn Bunckenberg had taken her second win in Wellington's biggest multisport event.

The epic kayaking, mountain biking and mountain running event around the hills, harbour and coastlines of Porirua City attracted a record field in 2019 and confirmed its growing stature by winning the Wellington Community Award for Sport and Recreation.

The multi-faceted race showcases the districts outdoor wonderland, from hidden coastal tracks to urban trails, the scenic Whitireia Coastal Park, Porirua Harbour and private coastal farmlands, to purpose-built mountain bike trails on Rangituhi-Colonial Knob.

Kathryn Bunckenberg knows this race well and the family name is equally well-known. She won in 2017 and again this year, while her twin sister Lizzy won in 2015, 2016 and 2018. The outdoor instructor led from start to finish, beating Laura Seary by 70min in 5hrs 36min 16secs to finish sixth overall. Kathryn's sister Lizzy managed to stay on the podium in 2019 as part of the winning women's team with Vicki Vertongen and Grace Goodall.

Men's winner, Lachie Brownlie from Nelson, also led from start to finish, leading by 10min after the 10k kayak and then adding another two minutes on the 30k mountain bike. The 18k mountain run, however, is the crunch point in this race and Brownlie had to pull out all the stops to hold off local standout Angus Watson. Brownlie still had four minutes in hand at the finish, finishing in 4hrs 48min 29secs to improve on his second place in 2018. Behind them, Wellingtonian's Alex Lark and Matt Penny finished side-by-side, with Lark being given third place while Penny took veteran honours.

The Duathlon option was dominated by Wellington's Martin McCruddon and Upper Hutt's Kim Hurst. Both led from start to finish, with McCruddon opening a five-minute lead on the mountain bike section and then cruising the run to win by three minutes in 3hrs 40min 09secs. Behind him Wellington's Dan Kellow came from eighth after the mountain bike to claim second place and first veteran.

The women's duathlon winner was perhaps the performance of the day. Former 24-hour mountain bike world champion, Kim Hurst, was always going to lead off the ride. But she shocked onlookers by outrunning many men to finish third overall in a women's record of 3hrs 46min 32secs, 45min clear of Rotorua's Jo Pawson and Canadian Lisa Howard.

In other events, Wellington's Moller family featured strongly yet again. Brothers Bruce, Gary and Gordon – all over 60 years of age – claimed third overall and first veterans in the multisport teams. Meanwhile, Gary's daughters Mary-Anne and Myra combined to win the duathlon teams.

The individual events featured close racing. Just 85secs separated the first three men in the 18k mountain run, with Wellington's Chris Swallow holding off Porirua's Laurence Pidcock and Marlborough's Sam Hansby in 1hr 32min 52secs. The men's mountain bike was also a nail-biter, with Porirua's Matt Prosser outsprinting Wellington's Sam Fisher by one second in 1hr 36min 23secs. The women's races were clearer cut, however, with Dannielle Gibbon (LH) and Mel Aitken (Wgtn) taking out the mountain bike and mountain run. Lower Hutt's George Henderson and Wellington's Katie Jenkies took out the Arena 9k Fun Run/Walk.

In 2020 the 15th anniversary Porirua Grand Traverse is scheduled for Sunday 5th April.